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lating conditions, and with perhaps the added aid of coffee and cigars, that he conceived this description of Dickens's personal appearance: "His face had a peculiar tint or quality, . . . a sort of pale glitter and animation, very much alive and yet with something deathly about it, like a corpse galvanized by a god. . . . Brown of hair and beard, . . . he had . . . eyes that were always darting about like brilliant birds."

A writer employing the meditative and scholarly, rather than the recklessly impressionistic, method, might in the end arrive at Mr. Chesterton's own conclusion—that Dickens is the greatest of nineteenth-century novelists, the most stupendous imaginative force of his age. In which assumption, it seems possible that Dickens has only just begun to be written about, that future critics will neglect him far less frankly. Meanwhile, such a book as Mr. Chesterton's will help much in precipitating a sane estimate of the man on whom not idolatry, nor contempt, nor the profitless habit of contrasting him with Thackeray, has shed an adequately interpretative light.

OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR.

"THE SANDS OF PLEASURE."*

THE right to deal in fiction with the more unsavory facts of life, like the license to compound or administer powerful remedies, is one which the weight of public opinion concedes most cautiously, and only to such novelists as vindicate themselves by their method of using such material. No amount of specious argument will help a book that ventures to probe the plague-spots of our social structure, unless the book contains within itself its own ample justification. It must be the product of assured knowledge and worthy motive; its mood must not be hysterical, or brutal or gloating; but, like a skilful surgeon, it must do the probing with sympathetic understanding and unflinching purpose. And because a writer who combines these qualities is rare, when occasionally such a book as Mr. Filson Young's "Sands of Pleasure" is unobtrusively put forth, it is not only a duty but a privilege to give it the fearless and cordial recognition which its purpose and its workmanship deserve.

* "The Sands of Pleasure." By Filson Young. Boston: Dana, Estes & Co.

There is, however, one initial obligation resting upon the reviewer of such a book as "The Sands of Pleasure," and that is to say, in unmistakable terms, that it is not a volume to put indiscriminately into the hands of every reader of fiction, regardless of age and sex. It is meant for serious men and thoughtful women, who have learned to look upon life's realities calmly and undismayed, and not, as the author puts it, "with shudderings and averted eyes." However salutary, as a tonic, strychnine may sometimes be, it is customary to label the bottle containing it with a warning symbol. Mr. Young has similarly prefixed his warning to the public, in the shape of a frank and sane introduction to a book which throughout is conspicuous for its brave frankness and its splendid sanity. He wishes every one who opens its covers to understand at the outset that it deals with the social and moral problems offered by the "half-world," which are as old as civilization itself. Of his heroine, he says with grave significance:

"The profession of Toni is a very ancient one, and has been held honorable in other times than ours; and although, in spite of the determined idealism of some people who write and speak of it in ignorance, it is in fact dishonorable and degraded, its social influence is too great to be ignored. In obscure ways it impinges upon some of the finest characters among mankind, takes its part in their education, and through them makes its mark on the whole world."

A dozen volumes rise up in the reader's mind to challenge comparison; but they are almost all of them from the pens of Frenchmen — Balzac's "*Splendeurs et Misères*"; Murger's "*Vie de Bohème*," which painted the sins and the sorrows of the Latin Quarter with too indulgent an irony; Zola's "*Nana*," which, although insisting too much upon the physical side of life, shows more relentlessly than any other novel the gradual spread of the social miasma, upward through the successive social strata, until it became one of the potent influences which overthrew an empire. And, of course, to an English reader the two books most likely to occur, because made familiar through the medium of the stage, are Dumas's "*Dame aux Camélias*," and Daudet's "*Sapho*" — the latter offering the nearest approach in spirit to Mr. Young's story; while "*Camille*," with its false standards and its mawkish sentimentality, affords the sharpest contrast. In taking up the plot of "The Sands of Pleasure," nothing serves

so well to emphasize its strong and yet delicate art as to contrast it with the well-known plot of the younger Dumas.

But, while Mr. Young may be accredited with having written a story far more true to life than did the author of "*Camille*," there is no intention to suggest that this brave and promising venture of his in fiction equals at one leap the masters of French realism, but merely that "The Sands of Pleasure" would not be greatly out of its proper place somewhere on a shelf in the vicinity of Daudet and of Maupassant—the Maupassant of "*La Maison Tellier*." In assigning him so high a place, it is necessary to accredit him with having done three things unusually well. First, the technique of both the construction and the elaboration of his plot is excellent. The symbolism of his title is effectively carried into the very backbone of the story itself. His Richard Gray, like many another man in real life, has learned effectively to build his house upon the rock, so far as the hard, concrete, business interests of life go on. To be explicit, he is by profession a designer and builder of lighthouses, spending his years in grappling with the material forces of nature, calculating the side-thrust of storm-driven waves, priding himself that his structures will defy the passage of time. But the other side of his nature, his human, emotional side, has been systematically neglected and starved; until one summer, when his first youth has almost passed by, chance takes him on a brief vacation to Paris, and plunges him, under the guidance of a friend who knows it well, into the bewildering and meretricious glitter of the underworld. Because he has so long starved the human, passionate side of his nature, he becomes reckless over the happiness suddenly thrust upon him.

Other men, who have strolled long and often over the sands of pleasure, can recognize its treacherous and unstable nature. But Richard knows no better than to lay the foundation of his happiness in sand.

Secondly, Mr. Young has given us, in Toni, one vital, enduring character, and one which refuses to be forgotten. From the instant when she first brings into the pages of the book the perverse charm of her little red mouth, alluring and repellent, and "eyes that contradict the innocence of her face with their deep, golden fire," her personality haunts the reader, like the memory of some living woman of rare physical charm; her soft,

dainty voice, with its odd Polish accent, rings in your ears: "My dear, I give you my vord, I never laugh so much in all my life!" Indeed, it is not too much to say that, in the whole range of recent fiction, there is no portrayal of a woman so intensely alive, so vitally, unmistakably individualized as Toni.

And, lastly, Mr. Young has not tried to interfere with the characters in his story; he has been content to bring them together and let them work out their own destinies—all of which is only another way of saying that he has developed the psychology of his story with rare subtlety. Richard Gray, like Armand Duval in "*La Dame aux Camélias*," has founded the structure of his happiness upon shifting sand. Both authors understood this fact, both built the last act of their drama upon it. But a chasm yawns between the two stories. Dumas saw his Marguerite Gautier through a fog of idealism. To wreck the edifice of Armand's dreams, aid from the outside world must be invoked; the father must intervene, with all the social prejudices and family interests that he represents. Mr. Young saw the facts with far greater clarity. He knew that no outside interference was needed, because the happiness of Richard and Toni was bound to fall by itself, by its inherent weakness, by the world-wide gulf between their natures. Toni, though for once in her life she knew the stirrings of a passion which was closely allied to love, possessed the prejudices and limitations of her class. She lived in a different world, she spoke a different language from the man who loved her. The break between them is logical, inevitable, foreordained; and, when it comes, one forgets the shame, the sordidness, the pitiful triviality of the motive; one thinks only of the fine art which has wrought out a scene so intensely, poignantly human. And yet, if the author had chosen to end his story here, at the moment of this unavoidable rupture, it would have left behind it a sense of gloom and discouragement.

But he carries it forward just far enough to show how a man of strong nature will save himself from the wreck of his shattered happiness, bringing with him out of the ruins something permanent, something which will make all his future building better and finer than it would have been had he never built upon the sands.

FREDERIC TABER COOPER.